

PETRULLO)

YARUROS OF VENEZUELA

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where they believe their gods live. It was only when the sun began to burn our bodies that they approached me to chat. They expressed their concern over my illness and soon busied themselves to make me as comfortable as possible. While I distributed among them a few presents bought for them in Urbana, and turned all of the food over to Landaeta, the younger men were busy building a sun shelter, an arbor of the sweet-smelling guava bush, though for themselves they had only branches thrust into the sands, giving only a thin shade. From now on, I was completely in their care, and they were careful nurses and tender friends. The best of the hunt was mine, and even the women delighted in taking care of my clothing, and in bringing me delicacies.

They were glad to see me, and the women shamans soon began their chants while the men surrounded me and told me in their own language and in broken Spanish what had occurred the previous night.

- [562] Men are prohibited from singing during the day, but the women sit in swinging hammocks and chant their songs. I learned, too, that Landaeta's daughter had not died, for there she was, grateful and shyly looking at me, completely well. They attributed her cure to me, though I was not at all responsible for it. During the night, they told me, the gods had come among us, and told them that I, too, was one of Kuma's children, and again they insisted that I was related to them.

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I learned that Puaná and Itciai are cocreators with Kuma, the mother goddess, and they are directly responsible for the actual creation of the world. Hatchawa, in the form of a little boy, is another god who has given mankind fire, the bow and arrow, and many other blessings. Now, when the shaman sings at night his soul leaves his body and travels to the land of Kuma, leaving his body behind. The gods may come then, enter his body in the form of songs, and transmit their messages to the Yaruros. They had come the night before to greet me and to reassure my friends of my goodness and my own powers of shamanism.

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We sat, smoked, and talked all day. In the afternoon we feasted on crocodile, turtle eggs, wild roots, palm nuts, and honey. Finishing our dinner, we sat quietly facing the west, watching the skies. As the sun set low again, rays of gold, blue, and white shot into the sky from the horizon, and my friends rejoiced at this certain greeting of Kuma to us.

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Darkness came upon us, and in anticipation of a long night of singing and dancing—I could sing but could not dance, since I could not stand up—I lay on the sands to rest before the beginning of the ceremonies, but the skies interested the Yaruros and they came to tell me what they read there. The brightness of the stars and the changing

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'The sense of strict inviolability of personal rights carries over to personal services. Never did a husband order his wife to do anything outside of her proper domain. While I lived with them, in spite of the excellent care they gave me, even to the point of anticipating my wishes in a great many cases, never did a husband request his wife to prepare food for me. He asked her if she would, acting merely as my messenger. No closer relationship can exist than between maternal uncle and nephew, yet even he does not feel free to ask any service of his nephew, nor to take the latter's personal property.

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DIVISION OF LABOR

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Sexual dichotomy in economic activities is clearly defined. In a general way, it may be said that the rougher, harder, and more dangerous work belongs in the province of male activity and that there is no task which calls for strength or danger that properly belongs in the realm of woman's activity. Should any woman be engaged in a hard or dangerous piece of work and a man happens to be present there is a tacit assumption of the task by the latter. Hunting and fishing and presumably the act of fighting in war are man's tasks. The gathering of roots, fruits, seed, and their preparation belongs to the women. It is interesting to note that the gathering of honey, which entails some risk, is done by the men. The making of canoes, the making of implements, of hammocks, the activities in making camp are all in man's domain. The preparation of food and the making of pottery and basketry are woman's tasks.

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HUNTING AND FISHING

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Hunting and fishing are male occupations exclusively. As soon as the young boy is able to toddle about he is made to play with bow and arrow and learns to make these indispensable tools. It is a common sight to see little boys who are too young to be taken along by the men on hunting expeditions playing at the game of hunting; and when a man is in camp busily preparing his hunting equipment his young son is by his side working industriously on miniature bows and arrows.

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The equipment of the hunter is simple. Bow, arrow, and canoe are indispensable. A Yaruro does not like to roam on land, but there is no need for him to do so since he can get his game in the water-courses or along their banks. So he sets off in the early morning, generally accompanied by his hunting companion, to look for crocodile (*Crocodylus babu*). He will hunt for other forms of life only reluctantly, having a special liking for crocodile meat.

Because of the shyness of crocodile the hunter is most often forced to shoot at it from a distance. Since an arrow will seldom kill one

291 after I had been among the Yaruros for a time the women often dis-
177 carded their camisoles, even though I were present.

291 The men would normally wear a breechclout which originally was
286 woven by the women from the fibers of the moriche palm leaf, but
462 now it consists of a piece of cloth. Formerly the women wove wide
belts of the same fiber for the men, but this is no longer done. The
breechclout is held in place by a string tied around the waist.

291 The women, underneath their camisoles, still wear the old-fash-
287 ioned Yaruro girdle, which is made from the fibers of the moriche
palm. The fibers, which are about 2 feet long, are fastened together
at one end. This end is slipped through a hair rope tied around
the waist, and the whole mass of fibers passes between their legs and
under the waist string. Plate 25, 47 shows a Yaruro woman wearing
one of these girdles. It is fastened in such a way that an enormous
knot is formed in the rear, and when wearing their camisole the women
have the appearance of sporting large tails.

562 The women on the whole seem to be more conservative than the
291 men in their clothing and body decorations. Below the knees and
301 around the ankles they wear a thin string, and often they have
necklaces of carved asabache figures, which are shown in plate 21.

DELOUSING TOOL

412 An implement that is in great vogue is the delousing tool shown in
515 plate 20, 2. The serrated end is used as a comb to expose the lice,
which are seized between the fingers and crushed between the teeth.
The pointed end is employed to crush blisters raised on the body by
462 mosquito bites. These tools, also fashioned by the men, are used
302 exclusively by the women to groom their menfolk and each other.

CARRYING NETS

482 Carrying nets, of the knotless variety, are woven and used to
286 carry children and food. When carrying children the net is slung
854 across the chest from one shoulder; when carrying food it is sup-
ported by the head.

COOKING

252 The culinary art among the Yaruro is poorly developed. Much
462 of the fruit and the eggs are eaten raw. Fish is eaten half raw and
the meat of the crocodiles and turtles is merely warmed over the
fire. Sometimes the meat is boiled. In the afternoon the women
who have gathered firewood are to be found in camp waiting
patiently for the men. On the hot coals they will have eggs and
changuango. If the hunt is successful, and no hunt is considered

1[see category 116, end plate 15, - - - Analyst]

864 Even if there were stronger interest in sex than seemed to exist, there
831 would be little opportunity for the youngsters to indulge in any sexual
857 relations, since their playmates tend to be parallel cousins and very often playmates are lacking altogether. In the small hunting groups often there may be only one or two unmarried young people. Under such conditions a boy would either have to seek sex relations with one of his moiety sisters or practice adultery with a woman of the opposite moiety living with his own hunting group. We may presume that neither incest nor adultery are unknown to the Yaruro. During my stay among them there was no evidence of that.

[684] Another factor which tends to help the Yaruros live a strictly
582 moral life is that upon reaching puberty both boys and girls marry
881 if a mate is available, even though the wife or husband may be considerably older. Premarital romantic love life may be entirely absent on this account, but one suspects that another type of romanticism may be built on what is available. For instance, practically from babyhood the boy or girl knows whom he or she will marry and in waiting for the promised day one would suspect an emotional attitude is built up. It is certain that after marriage strong bonds of affection are developed between husband and wife. Strictly limited in choice, there can be no free play for one's desires.

548 In the Yaruro society prostitution is probably absent. I believe
177 that today some degree of prostitution has been forced upon them by the peoples with whom they come in contact. Perhaps we should call it purchasing of sexual rights, with the Yaruros playing a docile if not hostile part. After all, they are forced to acquiesce in a great many practices foreign to their ideas.

831 The above is the sexual ambient. As a result the adults act in the following manner. Sexual intercourse is considered one of the numerous natural acts. It is not exaggerated, little talked or joked about, and judging from the sort of life they lead not over indulged in.

• [522] Among the men, woman is not discussed. Neither virtue nor sin is the subject of comment. She is let strictly alone and uncensored. Obscenity is rare.

838 If any homosexuality exists it must be established by inference.
592 It is common among the hunting tribes for a man to have a companion with whom he hunts, travels, and with whom he spends most of his time. Such companionship seems to be closer before marriage than after.

I have observed two boys, unmarried because no girls were available, engaged in such acts as we are accustomed to impute to love making—holding hands, etc. Yet, lest we jump at hasty conclusions, it must be said that affection between men is demonstrated much more so than

121 harvesting it, require no centralized authority and render it possible and
 182 even probable that the management of production or distribution be carried
 433 on without it. The same may be said, on the whole, for all the hunting,
 [241] fishing, and gathering harvests, a notable and probably permanent feature
 [22] of Yaruro ecology. Perhaps the only crop which has a marked seasonality is
 corn, but its absolute size in the total production, its geographical distribution in production, and its position relative to all other harvests renders it insignificant as an effective promoter of managerial functions and formal arrangements of social stratification. It is unlikely, given Yaruro ecology that the forms of surplus would change; consequently their concomitants in social structure would remain constant.

On the basis of the formal characteristics of the ecology and of the surpluses one may deduce an essentially egalitarian social organization, with minimal ranking and leadership and with dispersion of the acts of economic distribution among a number of adult males or females any one of whom may produce a small harvest surplus at any time. With a relatively steady and reasonably comfortable total subsistence base, and with ecological arrangements which are spatially repeated in identical form up and down river, no necessity exists for stringent rules of local exogamy as an institution to regulate the labor force by redistributing its members. One would expect frequent marrying in the village according to the convenience of the contractants, and out-marriages to occur either as economic opportunity offered elsewhere or lack of women at home urged one out. The combined biological and productive role of women, with their particularly important technical roles in gathering and in food preparation, suggest sedentary communities and a matrifocal emphasis in the rules of residence. However, the importance and location of the men's economic contribution might be expected to balance this to a degree so that one might deduce male uxormatrilocal residence but with other, subsidiary patterns. This in fact occurs, occasional male matrilocal or patrilocal residence comprising the subsidiary residence rules. Political authority would be vested in the community, mainly among its elders, since little or no ranking or stratification is to be expected. In fact, Yaruro socio-political forms, in general, conform to all of these deduced conditions. They represent a model for any society based on the kinds of ecological conditions or form of ecology we have described. Where the ecology is even more restricted the deduced characteristics should be matched even more closely by the observed data. In this respect, the Sirionó, for example, tend to confirm the hypothesis, in that their partial sedentariness which revolves about horticulture is associated with matrifocal social organization: matrilocal and matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. They also possess autonomous local communities.¹⁸ The Apinayé also tend to confirm the hypothesis.²⁰

Where our analysis permits us to predict about the course of the ecological conditions, we should also be able to extend this prediction to the social structure. Since, under the given ecology, we can establish a maximum population for each Yaruro socio-cultural unit, and under the given technology we would expect no significant change in the ecology, no significant

ANTROPOLOGICA

make it usable. The need to eat makes woman's work more or less continuous, while the nature of production does not make man's work continuous. As long as there is food in the village, the man may rest, help his wife, or engage in non-food production such as canoe-making, as he chooses.

Objects used by men are men's property and are inherited by the men; objects used by women are women's property and are inherited in the women's line. Immovable property such as gardens and houses are said to be inherited by the decedent's children of both sexes. Male animals, such as boars and dogs, are owned by men, the females by women. Thus the division of property is as sharp as the division of labor, a fact reflected throughout the ideology.

No two producers produce the same quantity or inventory of goods, especially as each has great freedom to concentrate in the productive activities he prefers to the exclusion of others. Yet each producer contributes to household and community in what is felt to be equivalent value since most foods are considered good and of equal worth. Each household producing unit distributes supplies of raw or cooked foods to other households along the lines of coresidence and kinship. In this way, all villagers, as consumers, receive the same total amount of food and no one goes without. Thus all persons and households in the community are equivalent as producers, distributors, and consumers. All are tied together in a loosely formalized network of coordinate reciprocal exchanges and obligations in which scales of value are not necessary, since each person contributes approximately equally of all values. In this situation, accumulation of wealth by individuals is out of the question and management of production or of wealth distribution is unnecessary. Consequently, there are no economic status differentiations and no effective leadership among the Yaruro.

Similarly, no purely social differentiations based on status ranking occur in Yaruro society, except by casual deference to those of age and experience like shamans and village spokesmen, called 'captains'. The status of women is coordinate with that of men. The complementary and coordinate units, a man and a woman, combine into a series of coordinate but semi-autonomous units, the households. A group of these constitute the Yaruro social unit, the neither endogamous nor exogamous (Murdock's "agamous") village. All these units are tied together by links of bilaterally traced kinship, with coordinate relations on both sides, the ultimate tie being the reciprocal marriage of cross-cousins. Marriage is ideally matrilocal, and occurs most frequently within the village. As a consequence, the most immediate kinship ties in the village are matrilineal, whereas kinship among the men is more diffuse. The villages themselves are tied together by kinship ties, real or imputed, as well as by marriage and visiting, but by no other ties of an all-tribal nature. People who are known to any particular village —to 'us'— are considered part of our village's family, since their kinship ties to our members can be discovered or invented freely. Persons recognized as being of our linguistic and cultural stock will be included under the general term *pumé*, but may not be considered 'of our family' unless the kinship ties are recognized. Thus there is a Yaruro people, but no Yaruro tribal unit. Even the persons included in 'our family' do not constitute a unit, since there are no cross village unifying institutions other than real or imputed bilateral kinship ties. Even these vary from

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ANTROPOLOGICA

their attention. The shaman's position as link is emphasized by the fact that his wife invariably sits next to him during the *tonghês* to minister to him and to supply him cigarettes and drink. Thus, the socio-economic link of the household is also the unique link between the sexes in ceremonial life.

The various forms of socio-economic and ceremonial division of the sexes is even more remarkably underscored by the existence of female shamanism. As one might expect, shamanesses behave differently from shamans. Shamanesses sing only in the day-time. They, like Ku'man, sing from hammocks whereas men sing sitting on the ground or dancing. Furthermore, messages transmitted to them from Ku'man are sent only to them, though the men hear and understand them. The men listen to these messages with care and respect and with the air that there are things to be learned from them which they would otherwise not hear. The shamanesses cannot receive male gods or their messages. Female shamanism seems to be an affirmation of the kin-bonds of the matri-centered local group as well as a means of asserting the values and rights pertaining to the women's world. The women's experience ideologically, as well as socially and biologically, is recognized as being systematically distinct from men's experience in life.

Behavior in the *tonghês* is very relaxed. Villagers laugh, joke, sleep, play, get up, walk about. Sometimes persons may even fail to attend if they have chosen to go to work the next day. The only thing explicitly forbidden, because Ku'man would consider it most indelicate, is sexual intercourse. Otherwise, the lack of formalism and freedom of individual behavior so often noted before is again found here.

The importance of the *tonghês* as the foremost way of reinforcing social relations and communal values as well as for curing is seen in several ways. First, when there has been no *tonghê* for several days, one begins to feel and hear a bruiting for another *tonghê*. It is felt that much time has elapsed since the last *tonghê*. Someone asks what's wrong that we haven't had a *tonghê* in so long. Another says we need a *tonghê*. Rumors of *tonghê* begin to be heard. By the fifth or sixth day another *tonghê* is held and community bonds are again reasserted. Again, the sexual division of labor and social life observed in the other- and hither-worlds is systematically carried through into religious observances. We have mentioned the seating of men separate from women and the separate greetings given to the gods. This theme is carried still further in the exclusive women's shamanism and the equally exclusive capacity of men to do curing, either as shamans or as purely private individuals.

The *tonghê* illuminates much about Yaruro ideology. First, shamans both male and female are not considered authorities possessed of special gifts and prerogatives who interpret lore for the entire community. Rather they are considered merely the community religious spokesmen for the public expression of community values and for curing, who, by their own choice, enjoy and are willing to undertake the long, arduous work of training and practice. They reaffirm community bonds by repeating in endless verses the precepts and knowledge contained in the Yaruro ideology. All knowledge and all experience is, at least potentially, open to all members of the community and even the private or personal experience of each is made known to all. Any member of

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the community may do the shaman's work if he chooses, just as any can travel to the other-world or commune with the gods, although, because of age, temperament, or individual taste, not every one does so. There were, in fact, two shamans among the nine men of the writer's village, as well as a number of men who cured and who occasionally sang verse intonations in the *tonghés* although they were not shamans. The shamans are no more than respected community members outside the ceremony. Here again we observe the egalitarianism and individual self-determinism which is so much a pattern of this culture.

The *tonghé* also clearly shows the relationships which prevail between men and gods. The shamans and the other adults of the village converse with the gods in great mutual respect. They do not manipulate them nor minister to them, nor implore them. Before the gods, they are in a position corresponding to active and adept junior members of the village before their elders and especially their lineal ascendants. Furthermore, in a very real sense, no individual person, *qua* person, deals with the gods. The community, with its religious catalyst, the shaman, is the unit of action. The only individual relations with the gods occur in dreams, unconsciousness, and death. Dreams about gods are made public by singing aloud in sleep, the experience of unconsciousness is recounted publicly, and death, too, becomes public because the dead man is accessible through the *tonghés*.

The directness of contact between man and gods again emphasizes the unity of cosmos, society, and man. Within this unity, the sharp division of a male sphere from a female sphere is found. These quite coordinate spheres, in the other-worlds as in the hither-world, in religion as in socio-economic life, are linked through the household.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to review the major dimensions of Yaruro ideology. We may state these as a set of propositions, each presenting a major dimension of the ideology.

1. Cosmic structure. *The cosmos is static, limited, concrete, and internally continuous in that no barriers separate man and his society in the physical world from the nonphysical world.* The parts of the universe together form a rather rigid, symmetrical, architectonic structure, although each individual Yaruro may vary the description of the whole to suit his particular taste. All parts are of roughly coordinate importance. The major motions of nature, such as thunder and lightning, the revolutions of sun and moon, are often embodied, personalized, and independently operating entities, moved by semi-human motivations.
2. The good. *Goodness inheres generally in the cosmos as a system. The goodness manifests itself in understood causes and concretely and descriptibly known parts of the cosmos which, whether places, persons, or things, are given exact locations.* Conversely all known and localizable objects, persons, or places and understood causes are generally good.
3. The not-good. *Evil, which is not polar to good, finds its locus in specific persons, things, or events inside or outside the cosmos, and is manifest in specific results. The underlying causes of evil, however, are inac-*